

[ARCHERS]

593 Both parents have an equal responsibility in
861 the upbringing of their children—a frequent
source of conjugal dispute. Children are expected to respect their parents and are severely criticized, or even ostracized, if they do not conform. Schebesta (1948, 323) quotes the case of a son who lifted his hand against his father who drew his bow and arrow and threatened to kill him; the group forced the son to leave the camp with his family.

606 Restrictions on relations between affines such as a mother-in-law and her son-in-law, or a father-in-law and daughter-in-law, are known to the archers, and practiced to a certain extent among those in the north, but are largely ignored by others in the southeast. The restrictions may amount to total avoidance.

DAILY LIFE

512 The main essence of the daily routine has
already been covered. It is primarily concerned with food. The archer women and men are allotted to gathering and hunting, respectively, which occupy most of their time. Refuse from
514 the food is thrown behind the hut, and elimination
• 264 takes place close by, two factors favoring
361 the frequent moving of camp.

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are contradicted every day without necessarily causing any mention, but in the event of anything more serious happening later, the earlier incidents will be recalled and made into an issue that successfully embroils, ultimately, the entire camp.

But more curious than this slight emphasis on normal, or mildly abnormal and trivial patterns is the lack of emphasis at times where one would have thought the occasion to be of major concern to the band. Birth and marriage, for instance, provoke little comment, and concern primarily the nuclear families and not the band. The relationship between these particular attitudes and the nonlineal and fluid composition of the band is plain. The constant movement of families from one band to another, alone, opens up different and important avenues for recruitment that has the advantage of being selective.

With this in mind, let us look first at the daily life of the Mbuti, briefly, for it is of little structural significance, then at the life cycle.

Among both net-hunters and archers five days out of seven are likely to include some hunting. Even though it would be possible for the Mbuti to kill a surplus of game and dry the meat and store it for their own future use, as indeed they do for the benefit of the villagers, such measures are no more to their taste than to their advantage. On a hunting day the family rises at dawn, the mother and her older daughters who are at the age of puberty go to the stream to wash themselves and bring back water for drinking and cooking. The men-folk go to a different part of the stream, and generally slightly later. The older men might be excessively lazy and use the water brought back for drinking as bath water.

While the women cook the light morning meal and set food aside for taking with them on the hunt, the men shake out and inspect their nets, bows and arrows, their sons helping them or simply looking on. If the forest is dry, the hunt may start leaving within an hour of dawn, otherwise it may not leave until midday. Usually it sets off about two hours after sunrise and may return anytime between mid-day and dusk. There is no particular order for leaving the camp, but the youths usually go ahead, and not far away they light a fire at the base of a small tree, as an invocation to the forest for a good hunt. Men and women alike stop by the fire on their way, but with no ceremony. It does serve, however, as a place for a more cordial exchange of greetings than generally takes place in the still sleepy camp.

Back in the camp some old grandparents, or maybe only a handful

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her milk dries up and the child is given to someone else to feed, or if it is weaned early, then intercourse is apparently resumed. The third father, however, while acknowledging this to be the accepted pattern, began sleeping with his wife again within a month. This he did even though he had the rare advantage for an Mbuti of having two other wives. His action caused a major dispute. (See p. 207 seq.)

During pregnancy there are no restrictions; sexual activity in early pregnancy is believed to hurry matters along, and during the latter stages is merely considered uncomfortable, and possibly physically injurious to the child and mother.

As the evening settles in, nuclear families sit around their family hearths outside the huts, talking across the camp at each other until they go inside to sleep, or simply lie down to sleep by the fire (the women nearly always sleep inside, but youths and men frequently sleep on their hunting nets either by their own fire or by a central fire). Even when families have retired inside their huts, conversation continues between them. If there is any singing, other than of lullabies, the camp divides into age groups, each building its own fire. Unless there is an *elima* or *molimo* festival, there is no marked division between the sexes.

On retiring for the night family hearths are brought inside the huts, and any central fires are also brought inside unless someone is sleeping by them. When a central fire is broken up, each family tends to take an ember and add it to their own hearth. A fire is not left untended at night. During the night a man may awaken and stoke up a fire, warming himself by the blaze. At such times, when cold, the Mbuti smoke particularly heavily, and as a result they sometimes fall unconscious. They may fall into the fire and suffer serious burns, occasionally fatal, and this is one of the few generally cited causes of accidental death—other than falling from a tree.

On days when the hunt stays in the camp, because of rain or because some dispute has caused a rift, both men and women attend to specific chores. Men repair and add to their nets and make new bows and arrows; the women roll twine and work at basketry. Both may make and decorate bark cloth, a major activity on such a day. A good part of the day is always given to singing, dancing, playing games and storytelling. There is a constant shifting from family groupings to age groupings, but mealtime is the only time when there is a definite emphasis on the nuclear family. Even then, male youths, hunters and elders may take their food to a central fire and

512 eat there with their fellows. There is no set mealtime, and any one
• 264 person eating alone is likely to attract his friends, who will expect to
[576] share his food. Only if a family is eating together by their hearth will
they be undisturbed.

254 Infants are allowed to crawl all over the camp, and will be picked
up and fondled by anyone, and even fed, if old enough. If they get
in the way, or crawl into a fire, they are picked up roughly by an arm
or a leg, slapped hard and brought back to their mother's hut. Even
[668] at this age their education begins, a concentrated effort being made
to teach them erotic dancing before they can properly walk.

857 Children have a *bopi* (playground) of their own, separated from
the camp by a short trail. It is frequently by a stream in which the
youngsters can splash and swim. If they make too much noise, how-
ever, they are severely criticized, and it is not thought good for them
to spend too much time in the water. They have a number of games
that are mainly for amusement, such as spinning tops, swinging on
vines, and climbing on trees until they bend to the ground, then
jumping off. But even these games teach quickness of reaction and
body control. Other games are more strictly imitative of adult ac-
tivities, and are a primary means of educating the children. They
may be played alone or with the help of youths or elders, occasionally
of the hunters. Generally, however, parents fondle their children
rather than play with them.

From the time they can walk both girls and boys play "house."
They wander off from the camp, though never out of earshot, collect
the necessary saplings and leaves, and return making the pretense of
carrying a heavy load. The girl then goes through the motions of
preparing the leaves and sharpening the ends of the saplings while
the boy, with a tiny bow and arrow, goes off hunting. While his
"wife," as he calls her, sticks the saplings in the ground and makes a
rather crude imitation of a hut frame, then covering it with the leaves,
the "husband" is busy catching some kind of food—either a rat, if
he is skillful enough with his bow, or else some slow game such as
snails and grubs. If he is unsuccessful the two may go off together
and, unlike adults, fish. If this is unsuccessful the boy will say he is
going to "the village" and that they will "eat the villagers." He then
creeps into the camp and steals a morsel of village food, a banana or
manioc root, from wherever he can find it. The food is cooked and
eaten together, and the young couple lie down together and pretend
to make love.

GOVERNMENT: INTERNAL

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29. A girl returning from the village related how there was an administrator there who took her photograph. Masisi demanded the money, and the girl said she did not ask for any. Masisi's wife said the girl was a fool, that she could have got fifty francs. In fact, she was a thief because she deprived everyone of cigarettes. The girl was still standing up where she arrived in camp, and Masisi's wife went up and forced her to sit down, and thrust her private parts into the girl's face as a gesture of contempt. The girl's parents said nothing. 578 648

30. A man burped loudly during the evening meal, and brought forth insults from all sides that would have developed into a fight had Moké not taken the *banja* sticks and started beating them, a sign for the *molimo* singing to begin. 578 152 264 534 265 533

31. A girl, decorated with leaves stuck in her bark cloth, was dancing vigorously and some of the leaves kept falling out. She blamed the younger children and started beating them until they fled, crying. Nobody interfered. 301

32. Amabosu, for no known reason, refused to allow his wife to move the fire from their hearth when changing camp. She went to her brother's hut and sat there sulking for nearly a whole day. Amabosu, fed by his mother, paid no attention. 593 372

33. Occasionally, however, even the most trivial origins can lead to a serious and lasting rift. Such a dispute, described more fully in *The Forest People* (Chapter 6), involved two brothers, Aberi and Masalito. It started when Masalito went to visit his brother on a rainy day. Masalito was in the main camp, Aberi in Cephu's camp. Aberi was asleep, and his wife insulted Masalito twice, first by refusing to smoke the same pipe, second by offering him an old and dirty pipe-stem to take back to the main camp with him. This led to a fight between the two brothers which was temporarily healed by the force of ridicule levelled against Aberi, and further subdued by the action of the *molimo* in beating Masalito's hut as a sign of the displeasure of the forest. 578 152 593 626

However, the bad feeling remained, if hidden, until Aberi's death.

DISPUTES CONCERNING THEFT

Theft, apart from the kind practiced by Pepei, was unknown except in the village context. Sometimes when Pepei was caught he was thrashed; on the other hand, sometimes he was tolerantly laughed at and allowed to go his way. There was once, however, a curious case that was never settled. 685 177 183

THE MAKING OF CAMP LELO The children were running about in the semi-darkness, laughing and playing, without a care in the world; only a few of the older children, eleven or twelve years of age, helped their parents. The older girls carried an extra basket bulging with plantation foods, or else they carried a baby brother or sister on one hip, bending their heads every now and again to reassure their charge with a kiss full of the warm affection of children. Some of the older boys carried their fathers' hunting nets, proudly, leaving the more experienced hunters free to set off in pursuit of any game they might come across on the way.

Fires blazed in front of all the huts, and those who had not already eaten were quickly swallowing what they could before setting off. Two of Ekianga's wives, Arobanai and Loku, were already helping each other, the one supporting the basket on the other's back while the tump line around the forehead was tested for comfort and strength. In the forest, people cannot carry loads on their heads as they do in open country, because of overhanging branches and the frequent obstacles that have to be climbed over or crawled under. So a tump line is used by the Pygmies—a strip of bark a few inches wide, wound around the bundle and passed over the head. The women support this tump line by the forehead, sometimes easing the strain with their hands, but always with the head down, stooping to take more of the load on the back. The men, if they have to carry a load, generally let the tump line lie across the chest and over each shoulder, just to be different from the women.

I went over to where a group of men were drinking *liko*, a brew of forest berries and nuts and herbs, bitter, but warm and stimulating. They suggested that I should go on ahead with Kenge and a couple of other youths. The women would take all day to get there anyway, they said, even though some had already left. They would stop on the way and collect mushrooms and roots for the evening meal.

Only Ekianga sat silent, outside his hut, watching his third and youngest wife, Kamaikan, cooking his breakfast. He ignored his two

THE SONG OF THE FOREST

no longer worried me that the trumpet was a metal drainpipe instead of a piece of bamboo or wood, because now that I could not see it I realized that Ausu was right. It was the sound that mattered. As the men sang in the camp, the voice of the molimo echoed their song, moving about continually so that it seemed to be everywhere at once. During a lull in the singing it started giving animal growls, and the men looked around to make sure that all the women were safely in their huts. Almost immediately Amabosu and Madyadya came running into the camp from the far end, past Cephu's camp, picking their feet up high in the air so that more than ever they seemed to be floating above the ground they trod. They came right up to the fire and squatted down either side of it, the front of the trumpet still held on Madyadya's shoulder as Amabosu warbled softly into the other end. [481]

I noticed that the trumpet was still wet; it must have been given a "drink" just before it was carried into the camp. Now both youths stood up, and with Amabosu singing all the time, in reply to the song of the men, Madyadya took the end of the trumpet in his hands and waved it up and down, passing it through the flames of the molimo fire and over the heads of all of us sitting there. Some of the men took up hot ashes and rubbed them over the trumpet, and some even put live coals in at the far end. As Amabosu sang harder and louder, sparks flew out over Madyadya's shoulder, disappearing into the night with the song. [533]

Then the two of them went dancing off, around the camp once and into the forest. There were a few last defiant bellows from the direction of the river, and no more was heard. The men stopped singing and prepared to eat. Two caldrons had been boiling over the fire, and both were now ready. One contained rice, the other a kind of spinach made from the leaves of the manioc plant. Eaten together they are delicious. I wondered if there would be any precedence as to who should eat first, or if there would be any ritual, but there [264] [252] [262]

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765 was neither. Everyone ate his fill as and when he pleased, a couple of
• 264 the older men saying they would wait until the youngsters had finished before they ate. But they did not wait for long. I was told, however, that everyone *had* to eat, just as no adult male was allowed to sleep but *had* to sing while molimo singing was in progress. Apparently one of the greatest crimes that a Pygmy male can commit, 765
688 if not the greatest, is to be found asleep when the molimo is singing.

[536] One of the men stood up, and miming as all Pygmies love to do, he showed how they used to search for sleeping men, a spear under each arm, and how if they found one they would spear him in the stomach and kill him completely and for ever. I was told that then his body would be buried under the kumamolimo and nobody would be allowed to mention his death, even to remark on his absence. The [825] women would be told that the molimo itself, the great animal of the forest, had carried off one of their number, but like the men they would ask no questions and would never again mention the missing man.

765 The molimo was often referred to as "the animal of the forest,"
825 and the women were supposed to believe that it really was an animal,
534 and that to see it would bring death. That of course is why they
562 were all bundled off to bed with the children before the trumpet was ever brought into camp. And even when it *was* brought in it was often shielded by a number of youths so that if any woman should happen to look, she would see nothing. The animal sounds it produced were certainly realistic, but I wondered what the women thought when it sang. What kind of animal was it that one moment could make such threatening sounds, and the next instant sing more beautifully than anything else in the whole forest?

765 I remembered again Ausu's saying that the only important thing
533 about the trumpet was the fact that it had a good voice and could
538 sing well. I was reminded of the Pygmy legend of the Bird with the
825 Most Beautiful Song. This bird was found by a young boy who

THE CRIME OF CEPHU

to cook the morning meal. Back in the camp they sat outside their huts, legs straight out in front of them in what seemed the most uncomfortable position possible. From there they prepared the family repast, placing green plantains in the hot ashes to roast, or concocting a stew of mushrooms and chopped leaves with whatever meat was left over from the day before, covering the pot with large leaves to trap the steam and to keep out ashes and dirt. Any little chores that had to be done were done by their daughters, who scurried around collecting dry twigs to heat the fire up more quickly, or sat over the fire with their baby brothers, carefully guarding the pot and making sure it did not upset when the burning wood subsided. The younger women, freed in this way, relaxed and set to work making themselves beautiful. They sat in full view of the camp, unashamedly painting their bodies with black paste, calling their friends over to help with the more inaccessible regions. The buttocks in particular they found difficult to paint themselves, and rather than waste such an expansive area they would either bend over in front of a friend, or lie across her lap.

The men combined business with pleasure too, usually meeting at the kumamolimo to drink from a steaming bowl of liko. The young bachelors mostly cooked their own simple breakfast here, and together they all discussed the day ahead of them—where they should go to hunt, what they might expect to find. Cephu never came over from his little camp at such times. He merely waited until all the others set off for the hunt, then he joined them.

The men also had to prepare their nets. Helping one another, they uncoiled long lengths of knotted twine, sometimes stretching for three hundred feet, inspecting every section with care. Then, standing upright, the assistant holding the net off the ground, each man coiled his net again so that it hung from one shoulder to within a few inches of his ankle. With a loose length of twine he deftly bound the coils together, gave the net a final shake and hung it from

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224 emptied. Then each of the other huts was searched and all the meat
156 taken. Cephu's family protested loudly and Cephu tried hard to
558 cry, but this time it was forced and everyone laughed at him. He
626 clutched his stomach and said he would die; die because he was
hungry and his brothers had taken away all his food; die because he
was not respected.

765 The kumamolimo was festive once again, and the camp seemed
621 restored to good spirits. An hour later, when it was dark and fires
• 264 were flickering outside every hut, there was a great blaze at the
central hearth and the men talked about the morrow's hunt. From
[20] Cephu's camp came the sound of the old man, still trying hard to
cry, moaning about his unfortunate situation, making noises that
were meant to indicate hunger. From our own camp came the jeers
of women, ridiculing him and imitating his moans.

[602] When Masisi had finished his meal he took a pot full of meat
with mushroom sauce, cooked by his wife, and quietly slipped away
into the shadows in the direction of his unhappy kinsman. The moan-
ing stopped, and when the evening molimo singing was at its height
[516] I saw Cephu in our midst. Like most of us he was sitting on the
[829] ground, in the manner of an animal. But he was singing, and that
meant that he was just as much a BaMbuti as anyone else.

MOLIMO: THE DANCE OF DEATH

The evening meal was a good one, as the Pygmies had brought 262
in far more meat than they allowed to the villagers, and in return 264 •
for what they had given away they had received generous portions 439
of rice, beans, groundnuts and manioc, and a few of the tiny bitter 177
tomatoes which blend so well with manioc leaves and groundnuts
in the making of a sauce. When it was dark, the women and chil- 533
dren retired almost immediately, and the men gathered at the central 571
fire where four upright poles indicated the Pygmy version of a *baraza*, 345
or men's meeting place. At first, several villagers came to see what 535
was going on, and the Pygmies sang and danced for them. They
sang and danced until the villagers, tired after a heavy day's work
in the plantations, went to bed. Then the men really began to sing.
They sang and sang until it seemed almost as though we were back
in the forest. But any time there was a strange sound, and it was sus-
pected that there might be a villager lurking about, they stopped.
They had guards posted all around to make sure they were not
caught unawares.

It must have been about three o'clock in the morning when the 765
molimo made its appearance. It came into the camp preceded by two 534
youths holding glowing firebrands in their hands. Waving the brands 372
high in the air, then swinging them down to touch the ground,
they laid a fiery path for the molimo to follow. It was stately and
imposing. Following this path of glowing cinders the molimo circled
the village several times and then came to rest by the fire, where it
sang very quietly. Just as I wondered if it was really going to sing
as it did in the forest it moved off, and the tempo increased. Sur-
rounded now by all the youths, the molimo started running around,
faster and faster, making lightning swoops on the group of older men
who were sitting by the fire. The rest of the men were either dancing
in a frenzy around the fire itself, as if protecting it, or else they
were with the molimo. I heard a crunching sound as the molimo 765
plowed through a small field of sugar cane at the edge of the vil- 534

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866 made his way painfully to join the other boys, all sitting in a line on
881 logs. Immediately after being cut they are made to sit down and join
P the others in singing one of the many work songs they will have to
881 learn during the coming months. This takes their mind off the pain,
866 which is all the more considerable because after the operation the
177 wound is wrapped in a leaf containing a native medicine that is full
C of salt. Kaoya was very roughly handled, and Masalito ran up to him
[533] and put his arms around him, hugging him tight to give him
[759] strength. The villagers howled with laughter, but Masalito was more
concerned with Kaoyo than with them.

C Not long afterward the boys were made to dance, and then put to
881 rest on a special bed made of split logs, laid side by side on a rough
352 frame that kept them two feet or so off the ground. The boys lay
346 face downward along the length of the logs, their heads resting on
513 pillows made of plantain leaves. Over the bed there was a rough
P shelter, sloping down to the ground behind, but open all along the
881 front and on two sides. From the roof was hung a sacred banana,
177 which initiates and instructors would set swinging as an understood
C command for the boys to start singing. The boys were forbidden to
[824] touch the banana, being told they would die if they did.
[778]

C There were all sorts of other taboos, or restrictions. To get wet,
881 particularly by being outside when it rained, was sure to bring
P death. To eat certain foods was strictly prohibited. The boys had to
881 eat without using their hands directly, spearing the food with sticks.
177 They were forbidden to eat with their initiated relatives. The sound
C of the bull-roarer, a piece of wood that makes a strange whirring
P noise when spun around on the end of a cord, was meant to be the
[264] voice of a forest demon, and the boys had to show due respect and
[534] terror when they heard it.
[776]

During the daytime, when the villagers were present, either as instructors or just as visitors, the boys adhered faithfully to all these and many other rules. By their own rules, however, the villagers were